

Letter from Alexander Graham Bell to Emma Garrett, October 11, 1883, with transcript

COPY Scott Circle Washington, D. C. Oct. 11/83 Dear Miss Garrett:

Your note of the 6th inst, just received. I have thought of you many times since I wrote to you last, but I have been unable to spare time to visit Philadelphia, although I have passed through your city four times, on my way to Boston and New York, on imperative business. I am much interested in your work, and would like to have the opportunity of seeing your school, but it will be impossible for me to leave Washington for a month or so, as my little school demands my personal attention. Miss Gertrude Hitz, has never been engaged in the work of teaching deaf children before, and requires my personal assistance at the present time.

I think that the time has come, for some combined action on the part of all those interested in articulation teaching to place the results of articulation teaching before the public, and I have in view, the possible formation, of a national society, to promote agitation of the subject, and to assist the formation of day schools in all the centres of population in the country — schools where deaf children should be taught articulation and lip reading, and where they may have frequent opportunities of meeting hearing children, and of associating with them. I do not believe in the advisability of increasing the number of institutions or boarding schools in which deaf children would associate exclusively with one another. The recent census shows us that we have about 14,000 deaf children of school age in the United States (probably more) whereas all the pupils in all the institutions and day schools of the country scarcely exceed in number 7000. New schools must therefore be established, and I would advocate that they be day schools, containing small numbers of deaf children, so situated as to admit of the pupils associating in the play ground and for a short time in the school room, with large numbers of 2 hearing children. My plan

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would be to have the deaf pupils occupy a school room in a public school building, under a special teacher, and to throw them occasionally into the same classes with hearing children, for instruction in such subjects as drawing, sewing, writing, silent arithmetic, map-drawing, etc.

When we come to consider the work of ordinary hearing schools, we can see that there would be numerous daily occasions when the deaf children could profitably join hearing children, and I would propose to take advantage of those occasions, by having the deaf children in the same building with hearing children. The special teacher would thus be relieved from a good deal of work that could as well be done by the ordinary teachers of the public school and be able to devote his or her attention almost exclusively to the teaching of language in its spoken and written forms. If we organize a national society to agitate the subject of articulation teaching, I would propose to have the different articulation schools of the country give public exhibitions, in the larger cities, under the auspices of the society. I would have the agents of the society hunt up the parents of deaf children and invite them especially to the exhibitions, and place in their hands whatever publications may be issued by the society bearing upon the subject. I would aim at the parents of deaf children. If we can convince them that their children can be taught to speak, and understand speech by watching the movements of the mouth, an irresistible pressure will be brought to bear upon the other institutions and schools in favor of articulation teaching.

I am much interested in your experiments with the audiphone, and would like to know the results. Artificial assistance to the hearing will undoubtedly be of great benefit in aiding the instruction of the semi-deaf. I made an address upon this subject at the Belleville Convention of American instructors of the D and D — which you will find in the report of the convention published by the Ontario Institution, Belleville, Ontario, Canada.

Yours very sincerely, /s/ Alexander Graham Bell